

Having a potluck? Follow the storage, sanitation, and cooking tips in this pamphlet to keep your foods as safe as possible. This pamphlet is designed for small groups (not serving foods for the public) like office, church or social gatherings. If you have more questions, or if you want to serve food to the public, please call us at (509) 582-7761 x246.

1. Keep it Clean!

The #1 cause of foodborne illnesses is germs from dirty hands. To reduce the odds of spreading illnesses, wash your hands:

- ✎ Before preparing or eating food
- ✎ After going to the bathroom
- ✎ After diapering a child
- ✎ After caring for pets
- ✎ After coughing or sneezing

In order to properly wash your hands, you must use soap and running water. Scrub your hands with the soap for at least 20 seconds before you rinse. Remember to dry your hands with a clean paper towel.

Feeling ill? Don't pass it on. Keep other people healthier--do not prepare food for the potluck if you, or anyone in your household, has been sick with *vomiting* or *diarrhea* during the week.

Sanitize it!

Surfaces (like counters, cutting boards and utensils) also have germs. *Sanitizing* reduces the number of germs to a safer level.

A recipe for a sanitizer is:

1 teaspoon bleach in 1 gallon cool water.

Mix a fresh batch each time you cook.

- ✎ To sanitize counters--spray them with sanitizer solution and allow to air dry.
- ✎ To sanitize utensils--dip utensils in sanitizer for 1 minute and allow to air dry.

2. Keep it Separate!

Germs from raw meat can contaminate other foods. Handle raw meat safely to prevent cross-contamination (spreading bacteria from meat to other foods).

- ✎ While shopping, choose meats last to keep them cold, and bag them in plastic to keep their juices from your other foods.
- ✎ Meat juices might drip! Store raw meats and eggs below other foods in your refrigerator. If this is not possible, keep them in a water-tight container.
- ✎ Make sure to wash (and sanitize) your hands and all surfaces and utensils that touch raw meat before you work with other foods.
- ✎ Be sure to wash all fruits and vegetables under running water before you prepare them. Fruits and veggies need a good shower after playing in the dirt!

3. Cook it!

Cooking meats to the proper temperature kills most of the parasites and bacteria and destroys most of the viruses that might be in the meat. Make sure to check the temperatures with a thermometer.

Minimum Internal Temperatures for Safer Cooking

Fish, Shellfish & Lamb	140°F
Beef (not hamburger)	140°F
Pork	150°F
Hamburger/Sausage	155°F
Poultry	165°F

We germs don't grow well when it's really hot or really cold!!

What are Potentially Hazardous Foods?

Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF) create increased risk for foodborne illness because they can let disease-causing (pathogenic) bacteria grow. PHF are generally moist and have protein. Examples include:

- ☑ Beef, poultry, pork, lamb, fish and shellfish
- ☑ Milk and dairy products
- ☑ Sprouts and *cut* melons
- ☑ *Cooked* potatoes, beans, pasta and rice

You must control the temperatures of PHF to keep the pathogenic bacteria from growing rapidly.

It is important to keep foods out of the "Danger Zone" (between 41°F - 140°F).

Keep **HOT** foods **HOT**! (Use a stove, crockpot, roaster oven, etc. to keep foods 140°F or hotter.)

Keep **COLD** foods **COLD**! (Use a refrigerator or surround foods with ice to keep foods 41°F or colder.)

4. Cool it!

PHF should not be in the “Danger Zone” for more than 2 hours (or for more than 1 hour outdoors during the summer). If you are unable to control the temperatures of PHF, eat them within 2 hours or throw them away.

If foods have been properly hot and cold held, it is safe to chill them and save them as leftovers.

It is important to cool foods quickly!

- ☞ Allow for air circulation--don't pack the refrigerator too tightly.
- ☞ Keep the lid off until the food is cold.
- ☞ Keep the uncovered container on the top shelf.
- ☞ Don't fill the containers too full (no more than 2" deep for thick foods like stew or beans)
- ☞ Get it in the refrigerator within 2 hours.

Food Storage Guidelines:

Short, but safer, times to keep your foods fresh

	Refrigerator	Freezer
Cooked meats.....	3-4 days.....	3-6 mos
Lunch Meats.....	3-4 days.....	No
Raw meats.....	2-3 days.....	2-3 mos
Shell Eggs.....	4 weeks.....	Yuck!
Hard boiled eggs.....	1 week.....	No
Milk.....	5 days.....	1 month
Cold salads.....	3-5 days.....	No

Remember--Foods are safest within the first 2 hours after they are cooked! Prepare hot dishes right before the event--for potluck safety, do not cool and then reheat the ingredients.

Potluck Checklist:

☐ Will I be able to keep my food hot or cold or be able to eat or throw them away within 2 hours (including transport time)? (Remember events usually last longer than we plan.)

If no--take non-PHF like crackers, chips, sliced vegetables, cookies. Avoid cream pies, meats, melons, and potatoes or other starchy dishes.

☐ Will I be able to transport foods safely?

Keep PHF out of the “Danger Zone” at all times--even during transport. Provide frozen or hot objects in an insulated cooler to keep your meal cold or hot.

☐ Will handwashing be available?

No? Take foods that need to be eaten with a utensil. (Still try to find a sink to wash!)

☐ Are people going to touch my food?

Unless you provide a utensil at each potluck item, people will likely handle your food. Increased handling increases your odds of getting sick from a foodborne illness. Use a utensil or other “barrier” like napkins, wrappers or tissues.

☐ Planning on potato salad?

Cold salads made from cooked ingredients (like potato and pasta salads) require special care for food safety. It is safest to cook the ingredients and refrigerate them before you prepare the salad. Make the salad with *cold* ingredients and keep it cold.

For more information:

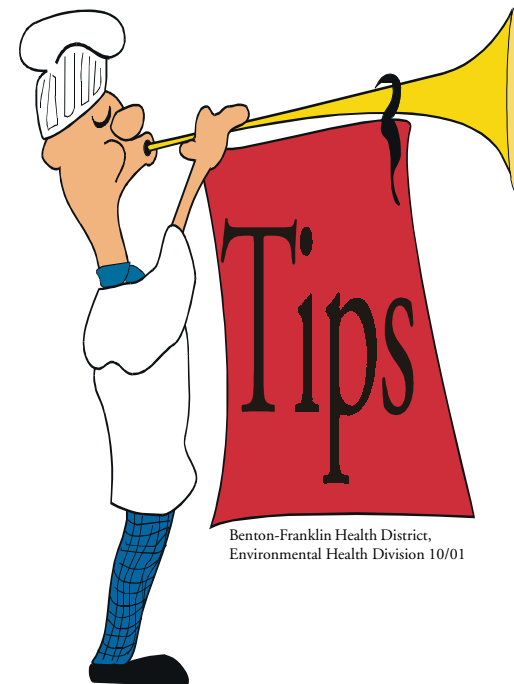
Benton-Franklin Health District, Environmental Health
800 W. Canal Drive Kennewick, WA 99336
(509) 582-7761 x246 www.bfhd.wa.gov

Other sites of interest:

WSU Cooperative Extension
5600E W. Canal Place Kennewick, WA 99336 (509) 735-3551

www.usda.gov
www.fightbac.org
www.fda.gov

Potluck Safety



Benton-Franklin Health District,
Environmental Health Division 10/01

